

**Opening Statement
By Chairman Chris Smith
House Subcommittee on Africa,
Global Human Rights and International Operations
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Over the last few years, the U.S. Congress has devoted a great deal of attention to the troubled East African nation of Sudan. Initially, we were as concerned about the issue of slavery as we were about the country's destructive civil war. Over several years, I have held numerous hearings on this issue – as early as March 1996. Unfortunately, to this date there is no proof that the existence of slavery in Sudan has been eliminated. Certainly, no reason has been given to Congress to justify the downgrading of Sudan's status as a nation guilty of trafficking in persons.

We also have devoted attention to resolving the 21-year North-South conflict between the National Congress Party government in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the South. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on January 9th of this year, there was great hope that this longstanding war would finally be brought to a peaceful and equitable end so that the suffering would be over and reconstruction could begin. However, the sudden death of SPLM leader John Garang seems to have thrown the peace process off track, and there is evidence that the National Congress Party may be trying to forestall the peace accords rather than implement them.

Most recently, we have been focused on the tragic situation in the Darfur region of Sudan, where as many as 400,000 people have been killed in a conflict that began in February 2003. At one point, as many as 10,000 people per month were dying due to attacks led or abetted by the Government of Sudan.

More than two million residents of Darfur have been displaced, many of them living in internally displaced persons camps. I visited two of these camps in August, including Kalma camp, perhaps the largest IDP camp in the world.

What I found in my visit was troubling. The tens of thousands of people living in Kalma camp refused to allow Sudanese police into the camp because they saw them as enemies. The police only proved them right by shooting over the camp nightly to frighten residents. When the shooting didn't chase camp residents out, a commercial embargo was put in place so that people in the camp were unable to bring in any supplies beyond what they could carry on themselves. The people in Kalma camp, like people in other IDP camps, are justifiably afraid to leave. Women have been routinely raped upon venturing outside the camp for water or firewood. Bandits are not only robbing people outside the camps, but they are killing them as well in all too many cases.

While in Darfur, I met with African Union troops, whose commanders told us that they had too few vehicles to patrol effectively and carry out their mission to protect the people of Darfur from attacks. AU commanders also told me that the pay they had been promised was not forthcoming. When I was there in August, the average AU soldier was receiving \$1.28 a day. Given the attacks and kidnappings of AU troops, I believe they are demonstrating extraordinary commitment under trying circumstances.

Last month, the AU accused the Government of Sudan of joining with the Janjaweed militias in attacks on villages and refugee camps. After supposedly ending their collaboration with the Janjaweed weeks ago, this alliance appears to be back in place.

The Darfur peace talks have not made much progress, largely due to the splintering of the rebel Sudan Liberation Army or SLA, who with the Justice and Equality Movement or JEM, declared war on the Government of Sudan nearly three years ago. The Government of Sudan also bears responsibility for these talks being stymied. Furthermore, Eritrea and Libya are supporting these rebel movements, and they too are making a peaceful settlement less likely.

Meanwhile, the SPLA, now a part of the Government of Sudan, has not played as noticeable a role in the Darfur conflict as they did under John Garang. However, failure to resolve the Darfur situation could help unravel the peace between the North and the South. Certainly, that peace agreement faces its own challenges – from a National Congress Party that seems to want an agreement in name only and from an SPLM struggling to regain its footing after the death of its longtime leader.

Too many aspects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remain undone. I spoke with the Catholic Archbishop of Juba last week, and he told me that development in the South was desperately in need of international support. He said frustration over the slow pace of the peace process will only intensify the separatist elements in the South. According to the Archbishop, the northern part of the government has not withdrawn from the South as scheduled nor established key commissions to implement the peace accord nor complied with the international commission that set the boundary between the North and South.

Congress has tried in our recent legislative efforts to take into account the entirety of the crisis in Sudan. We surely want to focus on the accountability of those involved in genocide in Sudan, but we cannot ignore other parts of the complex picture in this country. We must keep a focus on the North-South peace accord or it may fail and plunge the country back into a wider conflict.

Today's hearing is required to learn from the Administration how our government's policy is attempting to tackle this difficult situation and how Congress can help create a comprehensive plan to contribute to peace and to accountability for those who have murdered, raped, enslaved and otherwise plagued the people of Sudan for so many years. Our committee's chairman, Mr. Hyde, has fashioned a bill, with many of us working with him, that we feel will make such a contribution. We want to move forward in this effort as soon as possible for the sake of so many who are still in danger in Sudan.